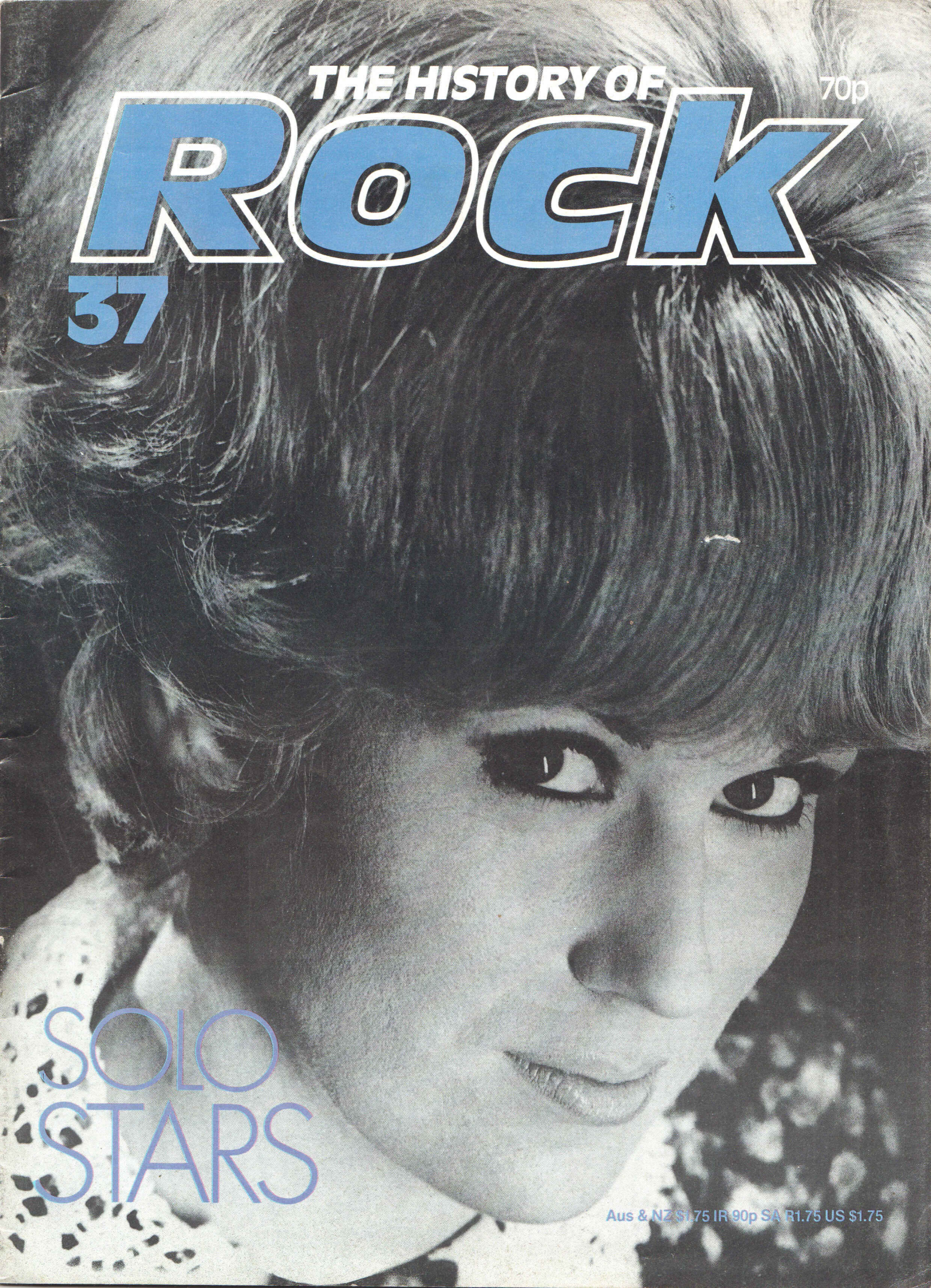
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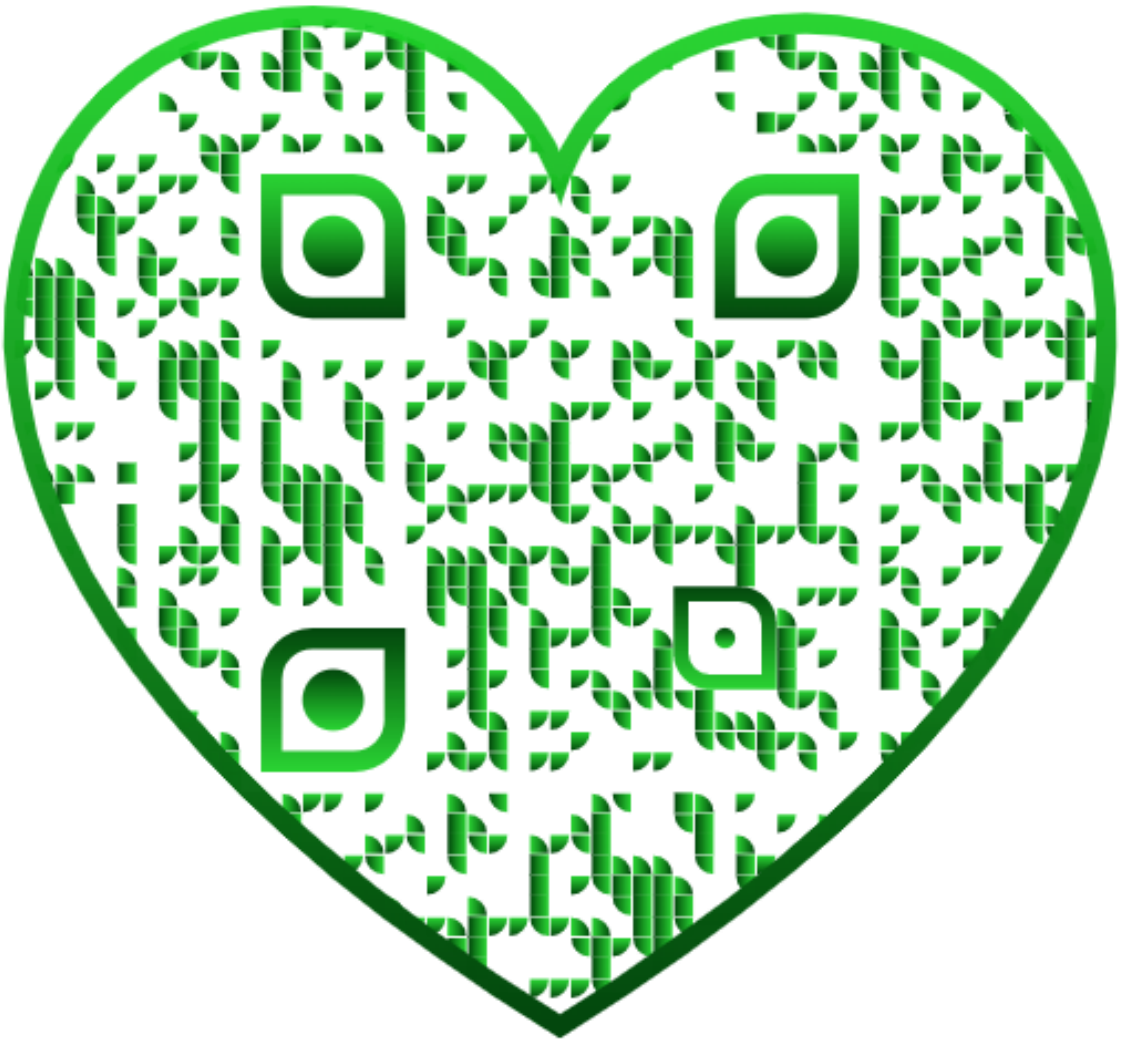

THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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The phrase 'Swinging London' summed up a style, an era and a generation that grew up as a new wave of groups and a new animation seemed to set the capital of the UK alight. To the sound of pirate radio, pop became fashion; this was the hey-day of Carnaby Street and the clubs where Mod office workers danced in their lunch breaks, and the time when the children of peers rubbed shoulders with a new aristocracy, the pop stars of the mid Sixties.

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Still Going Solo

The singing stars of the mid Sixties

Tom Jones (left) and Frank Ifield – although they seemed to be from different musical generations they were both solo singers who appealed to similar audiences and, in the main, sang the same type of song.

OF THE 22 SINGLES that reached Number 1 in the UK in 1961, 16 were recordings by solo artists 'with instrumental accompaniment'. By 1964, the situation had changed to such an extent that no less than 18 of the 24 Number 1 singles of that year were by groups. Behind these statistics lay the rock revolution of the Sixties. The phenomenal rise of the Beatles not only brought a new perspective and a new cultural context to rock, it also led to the wholesale destruction of the old order. Pete Townshend at one time noted that his intention had been to 'destroy the music of Bobby Vee' – and just how successful that mission proved to be can be gauged by the catalogue of solo careers that lay in commercial tatters by 1965. Eden Kane, John Leyton, Adam Faith, Helen Shapiro and Frank Ifield were just some of the regular hitmakers of the early Sixties who found themselves out in the cold by the time 'Satisfaction' and 'I Feel Fine' were dominating the charts.

Solo singers were now faced with an unprecedented dilemma, since the basis of both the music and the position of the pop star underwent a simultaneous metamorphosis. Musically, the 'live' sound of the groups was of crucial importance – after all, most of them had been playing the club circuit for some time before the Beatles breakthrough gave them their opportunity. Because of this, many of the original hit singles by the groups in the 1963-64 period were simple transpositions onto tape of the sound they achieved on stage.

Idols and fans

As for their position as pop stars, the groups on the club circuit in the early days simply did not see themselves as such. There was a closeness, an empathy between performer and audience that was quite new on the British pop scene – the performers dressed in the same casual clothes, listened to the same records and inhabited much the same social world as the fans who came to watch them perform. It was the most natural thing in the world for young fans of the Rolling Stones to wander up to one of the group at Eel Pie Island and chat about Chuck Berry and Muddy Waters.

Both of these characteristics of the group scene had disastrous consequences for the solo performers of the early Sixties. First, their sound was entirely studio-based and was generally dependent upon a producer who had learned his trade in the Fifties and was consequently unable – or, in some circumstances, unwilling – to come to terms with the new music. Second, the live performances of these stars were usually stage appearances in large auditoria (often cinemas) as part of package or variety concerts. Their elevated

position was thus emphasised by the physical distance between peformer and audience, in direct contrast to the experience of the groups in the intimacy of the smaller club venues. It was predictable, therefore, that the winds of change that blew through the Sixties would sweep most of the established solo stars into a backwater of oblivion. It is no accident that one of the survivors was Cliff Richard who, through his association with the Shadows, had in some ways predated the Sixties emphasis on a group sound and identity.

Macho panache

The response of the record companies was, also, chillingly predictable. From the position in 1962 when the majors seemed prepared to turn a group like the Beatles out into the street, the following year saw most of them falling over themselves in the search for any kind of group who appeared to fit the Beatles' bill. In this atmosphere of heady excitement, solo performers did not really rate a look-in. But despite the prevailing conditions, a few *did* manage to swim against the tide and, in the course of these years, one or two solo careers were successfully launched.

In terms of record sales, the biggest solo star to arrive on the scene was Tom Jones. His rising career was managed by the astute Gordon Mills, who later launched Engelbert Humperdinck and Gilbert O'Sullivan. Jones' success was due to the dawning realisation that, although groups were dominating the charts, they were by no means dominating the whole potential audience of pop music. The appeal of groups generally, with the exception of the Beatles, was strictly to the younger audience. This meant that record buyers over 25 were, in a sense, disfranchised by the emphasis the companies were placing on the group sound. Tom Jones' breakthrough offers an excellent example of a gap in the record market being spotted and filled with stunning success.

Boozing with the lads

Jones is especially interesting in that his eventual image and sound, which reached a peak of success with 'Green, Green Grass Of Home' in 1967, almost exploited the resentment felt against the groups by many older pop fans. The Stones, for example, were dismissed by many as 'effeminate', 'scruffy', 'subversive' and 'unmanly' – and, to add insult to injury, Mick Jagger clearly 'couldn't sing'. The success of Tom Jones was living proof that the role of the rock star of an earlier era could be revived with style and panache – exposing, in his fans' eyes, the feeble inadequacies and vaguely bi-sexual appeal of the newer stars. Here was a *real* man, happy in his macho role, boozing with the lads, getting involved in the occasional brawl and acquiring all the materialistic trappings of success. Here, too, was a man who would sing a 'real' song and peform it on stage in a manner explicitly sexual and entirely chauvinistic. In many ways, Tom Jones was in effect supplanting Presley at this stage of his career, with Elvis already becoming immersed in that peculiarly narrow and closed world that was eventually to prove his downfall.

Above: Tom Jones (right) and manager Gordon Mills (left). Below: P. J. Proby in his heyday, with screaming fans and trousers about to split. Above right: Older and wiser – Gene Pitney (left) and P. J. Proby in 1982.

The songs that Jones used to best effect were mainstream American country and western, an idiom that was to prove especially effective for solo singers throughout the Sixties. At a time when the standards of the rock world appeared to its detractors to be collapsing, the steadiness and the constancy that country music provided seemed to strike an emotional chord with those who yearned for older traditions. Alongside the various purveyors of bastardised country music who came to the fore in the mid Sixties were a number of female artists who, unlike their male counterparts, managed to appeal to the teenage audience.

Girls on their own

Girls in the Fifties and Sixties did not, as a rule, play instruments and yet there had to be a place for them in the gallery of idols: they made it, then, as solo singers and usually performed without a regular set of backing musicians. Their careers were very much more vulnerable, often at the mercy of an individual producer or manager. It was sometimes as if unseen hands were playing with the delicate musical talents of Marianne Faithfull and Sandie Shaw, and neither of these really survived their initial successes. Dusty Springfield, though, was stronger, maybe because of her training with the Springfields, a successful folk/pop group of the early Sixties, and her records displayed unusual power and sensitivity. She is rightly acknowledged to have been one of the very best solo performers of the Sixties.

Sometimes, of course, solo artists managed to make it by strength of material alone: singers such as Roy Orbison, with 'It's Over', 'In Dreams' and others, and Gene Pitney, with 'Twenty Four Hours From Tulsa' and 'I'm Gonna Be Strong', managed to survive the Beatles' onslaught. Though neither were stars in the sense that girls screamed at them, both were master craftsmen in the art of pulling the heartstrings in song – there was still a place for the emotional ballad in pop. Generally, however, the period was barren for those solo singers who wished to recreate the passions for the stars of the Fifties. Orbison and Pitney – and others such as Neil Sedaka and Carole King – were not so much echoing the tradition of the Fifties as charting the course for the successful singer-songwriters of the late Sixties and Seventies. Tom Jones might have brought to mind the Fifties' tradition but his audience was mainly composed of those already out of their teens.

There was, however, one exception to the rule – P. J. Proby, who managed for a few months to get the girls screaming at the thought of his velvet breeches splitting. The extravagant, often outrageous, behaviour of Proby serves to show just how far from the Philly teen idol approach the solo star had come. For while many male solo stars of the early Sixties had been the products of managers and companies, groomed and laundered for fame, Proby and his contemporaries were very much their own men. A handsome face was no longer sufficient for success – personality was fast becoming an essential ingredient.

PETE FOWLER

ROCK '65

Some of rock's most illustrious names made their first chart appearance in 1965, while several established artists disappeared from the spotlight. Merseybeat all but bid the Top Thirty farewell, with Billy J. Kramer's 'Trains And Boats And Planes' and the Merseys' 'Sorrow' being two last defiant entries. The Beatles, needless to say, were still carrying all before them, their singles registering for 29 weeks in the UK charts during the year.

New arrivals of note in 1965 included many British groups – the Who, the Yardbirds, the Moody Blues and Them were among the chart debutants – but none could challenge the Rolling Stones and the Kinks who, with the Beatles, were scoring with audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. The US charts, meanwhile, had seen the rise of folk as a commercial force, with Barry McGuire hitting Number 1 with one of the biggest one-hit wonders ever, the pseudo-protest 'Eve Of Destruction'.

A more lasting talent emerged from the folk scene in the shape of Bob Dylan; he hit four times in the UK and three in the US, bringing to folk an electric edge that was clearly popular with the record-buying public. As with so many musical trends, however, the British music business had an answer: they had their own Dylan in Donovan, whose 'Catch The Wind' made the UK Top Five in April.

January

14 'Yeh Yeh' by Georgie Fame replaces the Beatles' 'I Feel Fine' at the top of the UK charts.

20 DJ and rock'n'roll pioneer Alan Freed dies of uremia at the age of 43.

23 The Animals play at Harlem's Apollo Theatre in New York; they are the first white band to play at the Apollo in years. Bob Dylan is in the audience and admits to being impressed by the group's version of 'House Of The Rising Sun'.

24 British singer Donovan makes his TV debut on 'Ready, Steady, Go!'.

25 Screamin' Jay Hawkins arrives at London airport for his first British tour.

29 P. J. Proby splits his trousers for the first time, at a Croydon dance-hall.

February

4 The Righteous Brothers hit the UK Number 1 spot with the Phil Spector production, 'You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin''.

18 'I Can't Explain' by London group the Who enters the UK charts.

The Kinks' 'Tired Of Waiting For You' is at Number 1 in the UK and becomes the first of four Top Ten hits for them in Britain in 1965.

19 US R&B singer Buddy Guy stars at the Fender Club in Harrow, supported by Rod Stewart and the Soul Agents.

22 The Beatles fly out to the Bahamas to begin filming their second feature film *Help!*

March

On the relative lack of success of US R&B musicians in the UK, Keith Richards says: 'I reckon there are three reasons why American R&B stars don't click with British teenage fans. One, they're old; two, they're black; three, they're ugly.'

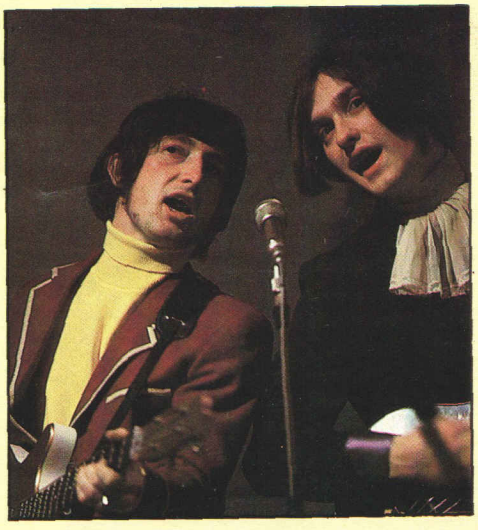
9 P. J. Proby is ordered off the stage at Watford Town Hall for his allegedly obscene trouser-splitting stage act.

13 Guitarist Eric Clapton leaves the Yardbirds on the grounds that the group has gone too commercial. He is replaced by Jeff Beck on the recommendation of session guitarist Jimmy Page. Clapton goes on to join John Mayall's Bluesbreakers in April.

14 The Yardbirds' 'For Your Love' enters the UK charts.

20 The Motortown Revue arrives in London. Motown stars Martha and the Vandellas, the Temptations, Stevie Wonder, the Supremes and the Miracles appear on the bill at the Finsbury Park Astoria.

28 Rolling Stones Mick Jagger, Bill Wyman and Brian Jones receive electric shocks during rehearsals at Odense in Denmark. Jagger touched two live microphones and hurtled into Wyman and Jones, who were both knocked unconscious; fortunately, Jagger's foot caught a lead, pulling out a plug and cutting off the power.



Above: The Motown Revue hits England as Martha and the Vandellas push the Supremes to fame and fortune. Below: February successes, the Kinks.

April

3 Bob Dylan makes his first entry into *Billboard*'s Hot Hundred with 'Subterranean Homesick Blues', which subsequently reaches Number 39. Artists of such diverse backgrounds as Sammy Davis Jr, Bobby Darin, Joan Baez, Pete Seeger and Tony Bennett travel to Alabama to give a concert in aid of civil-rights marchers.

30 Herman's Hermits open a 34-day US tour in New Jersey supported by the Zombies, the Shangri-Las, Little Anthony and the Imperials and Bobby Vee. The concert was nearly abandoned when 400 fans stormed the stage, but police reinforcements eventually managed to restore order.

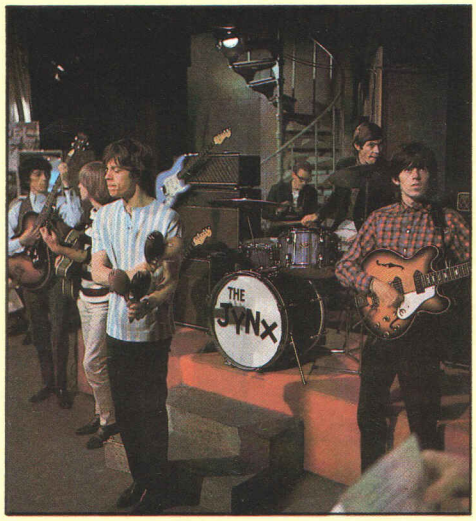
May
The Beach Boys are at Number 1 in the US with 'Help Me Rhonda'.
10 Black singer Mississippi John Hurt plays to white folk audiences at the Gaslight Cafe, Greenwich Village.
23 Joan Baez stars in her own show at the Albert Hall in London.
27 Sandie Shaw has her second Number 1 when 'Long Live Love' tops the UK charts.

June
'Mr Tambourine Man' by the Byrds tops the US charts – their first chart entry.
1 Joan Baez and Bob Dylan take part in a Vietnam protest march from Marble Arch to Trafalgar Square.
19 The Uxbridge Blues and Folk Festival opens, and stars Marianne Faithfull, the Who, Zoot Money and the Big Roll Band, the Spencer Davis Group, John Mayall's Bluesbreakers and Long John Baldry's Hoochie Coochie Men.
24 The Hollies have their first and only UK Number 1 with 'I'm Alive'.

July
The Rolling Stones' '(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction' is Number 1 in the US; it is the most successful record released there in 1965.
15 The Searchers and the Zombies leave for a 25-day tour of the US, opening in Chicago.
17 James Brown's classic 'Papa's Got A Brand New Bag' enters the US charts and rises to the Number 8 position.
22 Mick Jagger, Brian Jones and Bill Wyman of the Rolling Stones are charged with insulting behavior for urinating on the wall of a petrol station; they are each fined £3 and ordered to pay costs of 15 guineas between them.
24 Bob Dylan, the Byrds and Phil Spector visit a coffee house in Greenwich Village to see the latest sensation, the Lovin' Spoonful.
'Mr Tambourine Man' by the Byrds tops the UK charts after having reached Number 1 in the US in June.

Three of the leading groups of 1965 were the R&B-inspired Yardbirds (top), the Small Faces (above) and the Rolling Stones (below) – all from London.

August
1 Peter and Gordon begin a month-long US tour.
5 The Beatles top the UK charts with 'Help!'.
15 The Beatles play at the Shea Stadium in New York and receive a hysterical reception from 60,000 fans.
16 Dave Clark Five organist Mike Smith breaks two ribs when fans drag him from the stage of the Avalon Theatre, Chicago.
19 Sandie Shaw, the Pretty Things and Eden Kane team-up for a tour of Australia and New Zealand.
23 Two hundred fans break through a barrier in a Manchester TV studio while waiting for the Rolling Stones to arrive and are quickly hosed down by security guards.



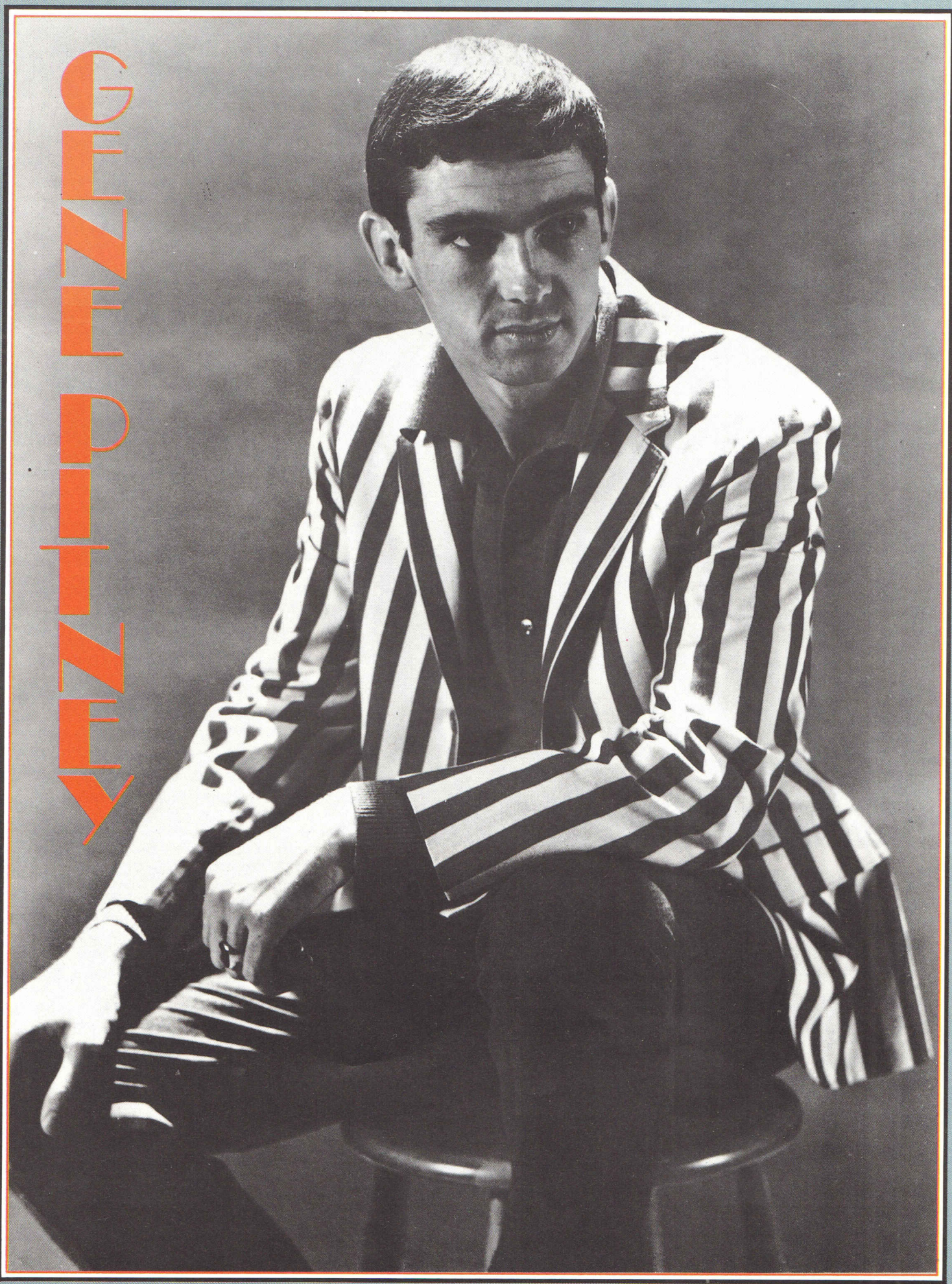
September
2 The Small Faces have their first hit record when 'Whatcha Gonna Do About It' enters the UK charts.
6 On 'Thank Your Lucky Stars', Mick Jagger and Peter Noone of Herman's Hermits are presented with special awards from *Cashbox* for their success in the US.
10 Despite lacking work permits, the Yardbirds play to 600 'beautiful people' in California for three hours.
11 Peter Frampton (aged 14) is featured in *Melody Maker* as the lead guitarist in Bromley-based group the Preachers.
20 The Who fly to Holland to star on TV.

October
2 Manfred Mann travel to Czechoslovakia for a 10-day tour, reputedly becoming the first Western group to cross the Iron Curtain.
21 Ben E. King stars in an all-nighter at the Flamingo Club in London.
22 Bill Black, former bass player with Elvis Presley and leader of his own instrumental combo, dies in Tennessee while undergoing surgery for cancer.
30 'I Hear A Symphony' by the Supremes enters the US charts and becomes the group's third Number 1 of 1965.

November
4 'Get Off Of My Cloud' by the Rolling Stones tops the UK charts – their third British Number 1 of the year.
6 The Shangri-Las enter the US charts with 'I Can Never Go Home Anymore'.
19 Writing in the *New York Post*, journalist Pete Hamill describes the Rolling Stones: 'They sit before you at a press conference like five unfolding switch blades, their faces set into rehearsed snarls, their hair studiously unkempt and matted, their clothes part of some private conceit, and the way they talk and songs they sing all become part of some long, mean reach for the jugular.'
27 Donovan begins a tour of the US.

December
11 The Isley Brothers are signed to the Tamla-Motown label.
16 The Beatles top the British charts with the double A-side 'Day Tripper'/'We Can Work It Out'.
19 Keith Moon collapses on stage at the Ricky Tick Club in Windsor, apparently due to whooping-cough.
27 British singer Jonathan King guests on the 'Ed Sullivan Show'.

ADRIAN GILBERT, JENNY DAWSON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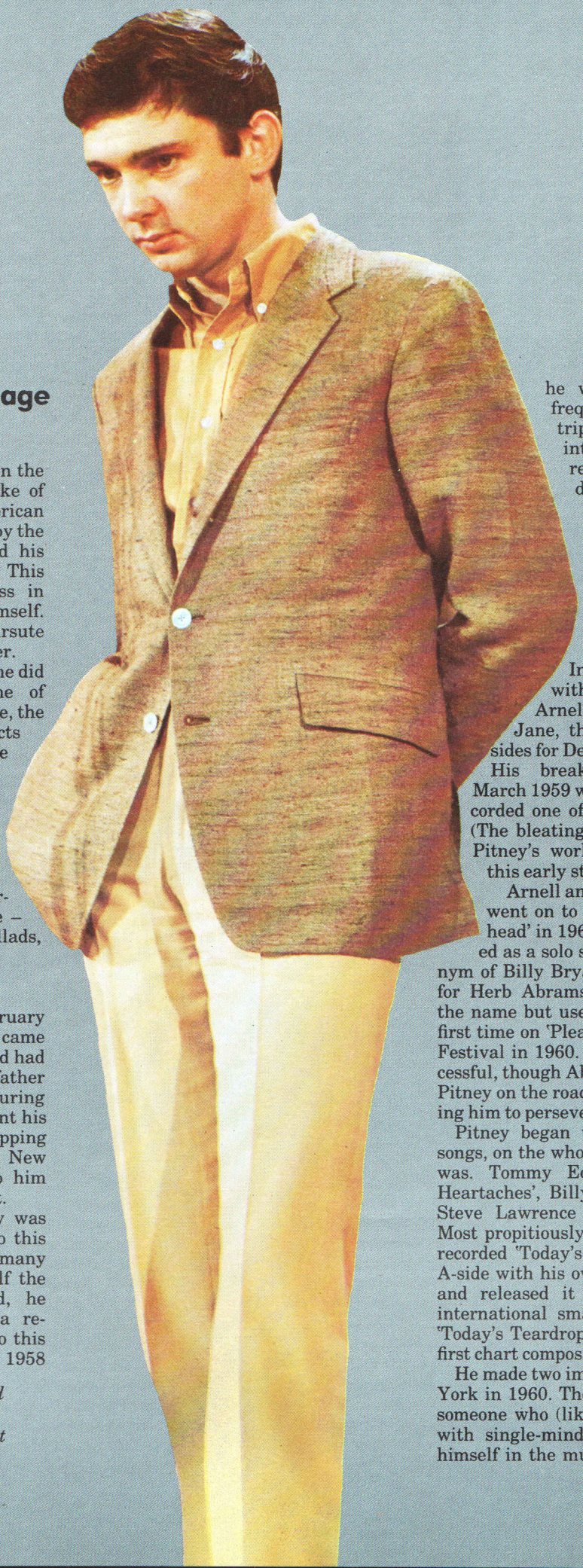


The man with a cool image and a tortured voice

GENE PITNEY could do little wrong in the first half of the Sixties. In the wake of Beatlemania – at a time when American stars were dropping from the charts by the dozen – he not merely maintained his reputation but actually enhanced it. This was largely because of his success in carving out a particular niche for himself. He was the antidote to all the hirsute rockers: the neatly-coiffured balladeer.

In one important respect, though, he did belong to the pre-Beatles scheme of things; the more successful he became, the more he allowed his creative instincts to atrophy. The Beatles were to use their hard-won pre-eminence to create art; Pitney used his to make money. Some of his early compositions had been distinctive enough to suggest that he would blossom into a major and lasting talent; but he came to be remembered – with some affection, it is true – only for maudlin melodramatic ballads, none of which he composed himself.

Stalking the hits

Gene Pitney was born on 17 February 1941 in Hartford, Connecticut. He came from a lower-middle-class family, and had two brothers and two sisters; his father worked in a local aviation factory. During his adolescence he used to supplement his pocket money by stalking and trapping mink and fur in the forests of New England, experiences which led to him becoming a fully-trained taxidermist.

Making it in the music industry was his main ambition, however, and to this end Pitney diligently covered as many angles as possible, teaching himself the piano, guitar and drums. Indeed, he assiduously groomed himself for a recording career, and his dedication to this end was always evident. As early as 1958 he was making regular – frequently discouraging – trips to New York, trying to interest song publishers or record companies in his demos.

Pitney's college-boy neatness (left and right) went hand-in-hand with well-crafted songs, skilfully arranged, that appealed to a broad audience.

After dropping out of university Pitney took an electronics course, and an understanding of electronics was useful when he began to develop his multi-voice recording techniques. In 1958 he began singing with Decca artist Ginny Arnell and, as Jamie and Jane, the duo recorded several sides for Decca in 1959.

His breakthrough occurred in March 1959 when the Kalin Twins recorded one of his songs, 'Loneliness'. (The bleating, self-pitying quality in Pitney's work was evident even at this early stage.) The following year Arnell and Pitney split up; Arnell went on to have a hit with 'Dumbhead' in 1963 while Pitney performed as a solo singer under the pseudonym of Billy Bryan. He made one record for Herb Abramson's Blaze label under the name but used his real name for the first time on 'Please Come Back Baby' for Festival in 1960. Neither single was successful, though Abramson had at least put Pitney on the road to success by encouraging him to persevere with his songwriting.

Pitney began to make headway. His songs, on the whole, were heard before he was. Tommy Edwards recorded 'Blue Heartaches', Billy Bland 'Harmony' and Steve Lawrence 'Tears From Heaven'. Most propitiously, however, Roy Orbison recorded 'Today's Teardrops' as a double A-side with his own 'Blue Angel' in 1960 and released it as a follow-up to his international smash 'Only The Lonely'. 'Today's Teardrops' thus became Pitney's first chart composition.

He made two important contacts in New York in 1960. The first was Phil Spector, someone who (like himself) was working with single-minded energy to establish himself in the music business. The other

A master of the emotional ballad (above left), Gene Pitney maintained a clean-cut image in the face of prevailing fashions (above). Later in his career he drifted, like so many artists, towards the cabaret circuit (opposite).

was Aaron Schroeder, who became Pitney's manager. He negotiated a contract with Musicor Records and shrewdly obtained the publishing rights of a new Pitney composition, 'Rubber Ball'. At the end of 1960, this became Bobby Vee's second consecutive US Top Ten hit, and early in 1961 was chased to Number 4 in the UK by a cover version from Marty Wilde, which also reached the UK Top Ten.

This major success proved to be the prelude to Pitney's personal breakthrough as a performer. In March 1961 he made Number 39 in *Billboard*'s Hot Hundred with another of his own compositions and his debut Musicor release, '(I Wanna) Love My Life Away'. Pitney was just 20, but he'd already been working towards chart ranking for three years. The recording itself testified to the experience he'd already acquired; he double-tracked the vocals and used multi-recording techniques to add his own falsetto backing vocals – ideas which were undoubtedly his own. From the beginning, it was clear that the person running Gene Pitney's career would be Gene Pitney himself.

There were two exciting developments during the ensuing months. First, Ricky Nelson recorded another of his compositions, 'Hello Mary Lou'. One of the most melodious and irresistible of early Sixties pop songs, it became a US Top Ten hit and a worldwide million seller for Nelson. Secondly, Pitney worked with Phil Spector after a flop with 'Take Me Tonight'. The song was a Goffin-King composition called 'Every Breath I Take', and although the song was not a huge hit, it was through Spector that Pitney gained access to the abundant products of the Brill Building songwriters.

Clean-cut slickness

Pitney finally achieved lift-off late in 1961 when he was chosen to record the theme-song of *Town Without Pity*, a Kirk Douglas film about American GIs in West Germany. The song reached Number 13 in the US and won an Oscar nomination, Pitney being invited to perform the song at the Academy awards ceremony.

This performance was immensely significant in two respects. First of all, Pitney abandoned his greased-back hairstyle in favour of a shorter, brushed-forward style, and thereafter maintained a clean-cut image irrespective of changing fashions. Secondly, it was the single event that established him as a major name across the US, and during the next two years he enjoyed a sequence of six Top Twenty hits.

In April 1962 Pitney released another theme-song, this time for the John Ford western *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. The fact that he was being chosen for such assignments indicated that the nature of his appeal – the dramatic potential of that powerful tenor voice – was already well understood. The song peaked at Number 4 and was followed, later in the year, by 'Only Love Can Break A Heart' (Number 2) and 'Half Heaven, Half Heartache' and then the driving ballad 'Mecca' in March 1963 (both of which made Number 12).

Meanwhile, Spector had gone from strength to strength, setting up his own Philles label and establishing the Crystals with songs like 'Uptown'. In the summer of 1962 he left New York and moved to Los Angeles, taking with him a new Pitney composition, 'He's A Rebel', which became the producer's first West Coast recording.

Today it seems almost incredible that Pitney should have written this rock classic, acclaimed in retrospect as one of the few pre-Beatles adolescent anthems. Indeed, it was practically subversive in suggesting that there was something cool about defying established society, and something admirable in someone who did so. It was wholly seductive – and yet Pitney himself was (and has remained) a model of conservatism. 'He's A Rebel' reached Number 1 in the US – and deprived Pitney himself of what would have been his only Number 1, for at the same time he occupied the Number 2 position with the sorrowful 'Only Love Can Break A Heart'.

British breakthrough

Pitney was an astute businessman who wanted to capitalise on his success at home by breaking through in overseas markets, and he always regarded the UK as a prime target. Thus even while he was scoring so freely in the US charts, he was casting anxious eyes across the Atlantic, since he had failed to consolidate his initial success with '(I Wanna) Love My Life Away', a UK Top Thirty hit. Even a promotional visit to aid 'Town Without Pity' had brought little reward.

Late in 1963, Pitney finally broke through, peaking at Number 5 with the Burt Bacharach-Hal David song 'Twenty Four Hours From Tulsa', which reached Number 17 in the US. In line with his policy of actively promoting his material,

he arrived in Britain in November 1963 to help push the song and made television appearances on 'Ready, Steady, Go!' and 'Thank Your Lucky Stars'. It was in recording his spot for the latter that he met the Rolling Stones.

Thus was written another unlikely chapter in the Gene Pitney story. He and the Stones got on famously. Mick Jagger was afterwards quoted as saying, 'We watched him rehearse the show, and were all knocked out because he was so professional.' They were likewise impressed with his expert knowledge of recording techniques. Pitney, for his part, admired the group and predicted great things for them. He even played a part in helping them achieve their ambition, both by his personal advocacy of the group and by himself recording a Jagger-Richards composition, 'That Girl Belongs To Yesterday', which became a UK Top Ten hit. The success of this song in 1964 firmly established Pitney in the UK, while he found time to repay the favour by playing piano on sessions for the Stones' debut album.

During 1963, Pitney had trekked across the US on a mammoth Dick Clark package show; he repeated the experience in the following year, when he had risen to become one of the headlining stars. Two lengthy stints of UK one-nighters were undertaken before and after the 1964 tour, the first in company with Billy J. Kramer, the Swinging Blue Jeans and Cilla Black, and the second with Gerry and the Pacemakers. Pitney was backed on the latter series of dates by the Mike Cotton Sound, whom he used for all his subsequent UK tours in the Sixties.

To those who recalled Pitney's earlier, excellent compositions, he explained that he now had no time for songwriting, being too involved in his singing career. Since he probably spent as much time looking for material as he would have done writing it himself, this argument was not wholly convincing. And when he did find a song that he knew was a winner – 'I'm Gonna Be Strong', by Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil – he took the opportunity to pen the B-side, 'Aladdin's Lamp', himself. 'It is,' he explained with disarming frankness, 'a monetary investment.'

'I'm Gonna Be Strong' reached Number 2 in the UK and Number 9 in the US in 1964. With its apocalyptic vocal climax it is perhaps the quintessential Pitney song. Its melodramatic style presaged a change of approach. During the 1962-63 period of his American triumphs, Pitney had adopted a deliberate policy of recording a wide range of material: 'I like everything to be different. I've seen too many people left in the cold because they relied on the same sounds,' he observed in 1963.

Once he was established internationally, however, it became clear that it was the big ballad which brought commercial success, and henceforward he relied exclusively on this style: 'My fans expect a certain type of record from me,' he said in 1966. The major exception was his recording of Charlie Foxx's 'She's A Heartbreaker', a US Top Twenty hit in July 1968.

One-man band

By the end of 1964, Gene Pitney had been elevated to the status of a worldwide attraction. He had masterminded his own way to the top by involving himself in every single aspect of his own career. Just to ensure that he remained on top, he bought himself out of all existing contracts; he became his own manager and frequently set up his own tours. Pitney's annual UK tours continued to be sell-outs for the rest of the decade, and his selection of supporting acts bore witness to the watchful eye he kept over the whole business. In 1965 he went out with Peter and Gordon, the Rockin' Berries and Lulu, and in 1967 with the Troggs. The 1968 jaunt featured Amen Corner and Status Quo, while Marmalade and Joe Cocker were on the bill the next year.

By that time Pitney had reneged on another of his earlier promises to himself, which was never to move on to the cabaret circuit, and had undertaken the first of his regular seasons at Batley in Yorkshire. His audience, no longer adolescent, had become young (and not so young) marrieds. He had his last major UK hit at the end of 1967 with the Cook-Greenaway composition, 'Something's Gotten Hold Of My Heart', although he continued to enjoy minor chart success until 1974. Since then he has busied himself running publishing and production companies, and playing cabaret dates around the world.

Pitney will be remembered as a master of the emotional ballad – although his early career suggested that he could have achieved considerably more had he extended his talents, particularly in the spheres of writing and production.

BOB WOFFINDEN

Gene Pitney
Recommended Listening

A Golden Hour Of Gene Pitney (Musicor 60-3233) (Includes: Town Without Pity, The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, It Hurts To Be In Love, Every Breath I Take, Conquistador, Lonely Drifter, She's A Heartbreaker, I'm Gonna Be Strong).
The Pick Of Gene Pitney (CBS CSP189) (Includes: Only Love Can Break A Heart, Mecca, I Wanna Love My Life Away, True Love Never Runs Smooth, Twenty Four Hours From Tulsa).

From Folk to Soul

Was Dusty Springfield Britain's best-ever singer?

BORN MARY O'BRIEN in Hampstead, London, on 16 April 1940, Dusty Springfield is arguably the greatest white soul singer ever to emerge from the United Kingdom. During the Sixties she achieved worldwide success, but later chose to turn her back on both her country and her career in pursuit of more personal fulfilment.

Her father was a tax consultant and she was educated at convent schools, St Bernard's in High Wycombe and St Anne's, Ealing; Dusty Springfield's background was comfortably Home County and middle-class. After leaving school she took jobs behind the counters of music shops and general stores and, in her spare time, appeared as an amateur folk-singer in the coffee shops of London. She performed either alone with her guitar or, more often, sitting-in with elder brother Tom in the bands for which he drummed.

The first real move into show-business came at the age of 17, when she joined two other girls to form the Lana Sisters in 1958, her first professional appearance being at the Savoy Cinema in Lincoln. Although that show was marred by first-night nerves, which resulted in Dusty tumbling down the dressing-room stairs, the Lana Sisters went on to achieve minor success and even made an appearance on BBC's '6.5 Special' television programme.

Wishin' And Hopin'

In 1960, Dusty decided to leave the Lana Sisters and join her brother Tom and a friend, Tim Field, to form the Springfields. They made their recording debut the following year with 'Dear John' on the Philips label. Although this sold but modestly, the group entered the charts for the first time in August 1961 with 'Breakaway', which reached Number 31 in the UK. The Springfields personnel changed when Tim Field left and was replaced by Mike Hurst, but their sound remained consistent – a kind of happy, good-to-be-alive country pop based on Dusty's lead vocals. As Dusty herself put it later: 'We were successful because there was nobody else around like us then. We were jolly and we looked cheerful and that was it.'

Further chart success came in 1962 with 'Island Of Dreams' and in 1963 with 'Say I Won't Be There', both written by Tom Springfield and both of which reached Number 5 in Britain. In 1962 the group achieved an American breakthrough when 'Island Of Dreams' made *Billboard*'s Top Twenty. This Stateside success led to recording work in Nashville – but the Springfields' introduction to the American music business came as quite a shock, as Dusty later recalled: 'We had to learn new songs in the morning and record them in the afternoon. I realised we were a bit out of our depth. We were in Tennessee, singing country music that the people there were born to. But it wasn't born to us. We had to work out every note.'

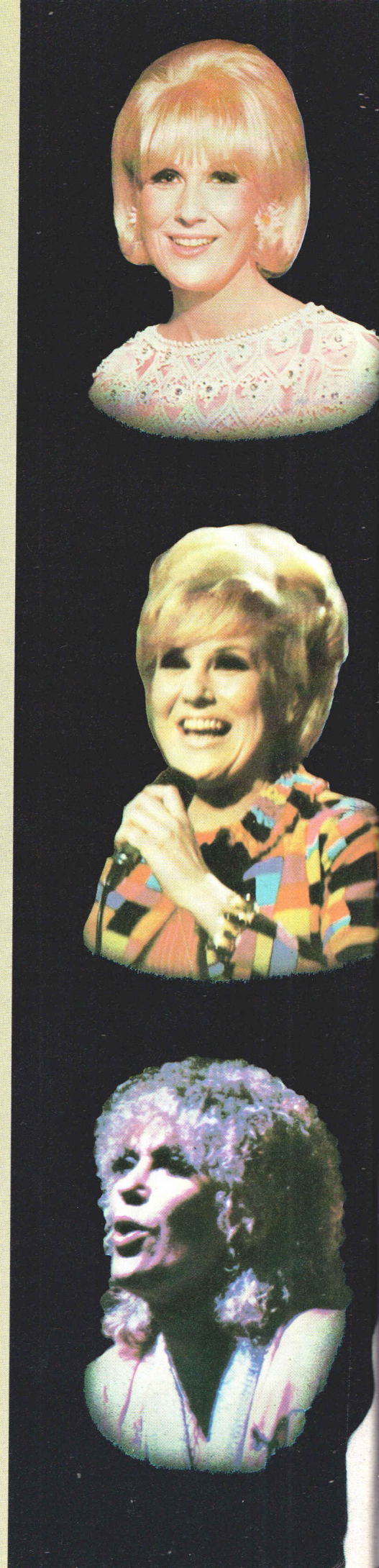
In September 1963, at the height of their success, the Springfields disbanded after a farewell appearance on television's 'Sunday Night At The London Palladium'. Although the split surprised and saddened many, it was understandable. Individually they had become bored, feeling that they had achieved everything they could together, so they separated and went their own ways: Tom to concentrate on writing, Mike Hurst to become a folk-club manager and later a record producer, and Dusty to become a solo singer.

With her very first solo single, Dusty came up with an all-time classic hit – 'I Only Want To Be With You'. Written by Mike Hawker and Ivor Raymonde, it reached Number 4 in the UK and Number 12 in the USA. Between 1964 and 1969 there followed 14 further Top Thirty hits in the UK alone, including Hal David and Burt Bacharach's 'Wishin' And Hopin' ' and 'I Just Don't Know What To Do With Myself', Gerry Goffin and Carole King's 'Some Of Your Lovin' ' and 'Going Back'. The singer's greatest success, however, came with 'You Don't Have To Say You Love Me', which got to Number 1 in the UK and Number 4 in the US in the spring of 1966. (The song was an Italian number, 'Io Che Non Vivo Senza Te', with English lyrics by Vicki Wickham and Yardbirds producer Simon Napier-Bell.)

The white Negress

In style Dusty had made an immediate transition from her country girl days to become the first and best white soul singer to emerge in the UK. Cliff Richard had early dubbed her 'the white Negress', a phrase which later became 'the white Aretha Franklin'. Most of her mid-Sixties output, produced by Johnny Franz, featured smooth, lush string and horn arrangements far removed from the sound of hard-core American soul but Dusty's choice of material, her fine broad torchy voice and no-holds-barred delivery left nobody in any doubt that the music came from the depths of her soul. She quoted Baby Washington and Aretha Franklin as major influences, but Latin American rhythms and the Motown sound also played a part.

Comparing the US music scene with that of her own country in 1966 Dusty was



Blonde hair, black mascara and plenty of soul: four faces of Dusty Springfield, who went from British folk and pop singer to international soul star.

quoted as saying: 'The indiscriminate choice of singers here [in the UK] is going to spoil the music. The so-called "in thing" is killing soul. Watch the kids cheering at a concert and a lot of them don't know the good from the bad.' For her, the initial creative action was the choice of first-class material – but it proved to be a struggle to find sufficient songs of quality.

The care demonstrated in her choice of material was extended by Dusty to her recorded product and live performances. A self-confessed perfectionist, she requested repeated takes of the same song or section in the studio, and live performances were intensively rehearsed and meticulously staged. From 1964 onwards she employed a full-time lighting technician, Fred Perry, for all her shows, well before many Seventies bands made lighting a cornerstone of their theatrics. But perfectionism on stage has its drawbacks. Live performance is by its very nature as open to disaster as it is to magical highs: the more tightly rehearsed a show, the less it gains from spontaneity. Dusty, always an intensely close and introverted person, found it difficult to project well in inter-song audience chat and took refuge in a tightly-structured show.

During the Sixties she toured most major countries, and reached the pinnacles of London's Talk of the Town and New York's Plaza Hotel Persian Room on the club circuit. She played the 1965 Royal Command Performance before the Queen and did numerous television shows, but the strain of live performing was there throughout. From the early days, Dusty had a notorious short and violent temper which was liable to surface at the slightest mistake or perceived error, whether in a show, during an interview, in a hotel or restaurant. So while she was consistently charting two or three times a year and touring throughout the Sixties she was also displaying the darker side of her character. She won the *New Musical Express* and *Melody Maker* polls for best UK and world female vocalist year after year, but was also parting acrimoniously with her personal manager, Vic Billings.

Memphis magic

This was the situation when, in late 1968, she changed record label to Atlantic in the US and travelled to Memphis to record a new album. Although immense in the UK, Dusty had never really achieved more than medium-scale success in the States, and this was an attempt to harness the singer's talents with American musicians and technique. The 1968 *Dusty In Memphis* album is now regarded as one of the classics of the Sixties. Atlantic certainly spared no effort or expense on their new signing; they used the cream of Memphis session men and put the project in the hands of Jerry Wexler, Tom Dowd and Arif Mardin, one of their top production teams.

Dusty took some time to get over initial nervousness but, with production values

Dusty with the Ronettes (opposite above); rehearsing with the Springfields (above) and belting out a soul ballad (opposite below). Inset left: Dusty enjoys a drink with fellow singers Rod Stewart and Olivia Newton-John.

that demanded perfection, she was able to demonstrate her abilities as an interpreter of soul. 'The sessions were all taken very easily,' she recalled. 'I was very inhibited at first, but the thing is that they spent such a long time on the rhythm tracks that you got time to unwind.'

Atlantic were keen to show the versatility of Dusty's voice, for the material included four Goffin-King tracks, Michel Legrand's 'Windmills Of Your Mind' and a Barry Mann-Cynthia Weil number, 'Just A Little Lovin', was also included. Critically the album was well received but sales were disappointing. Although the first single lifted from the album – a somewhat stilted take from early in the sessions of 'Son Of A Preacher Man' – made the Top Ten on both sides of the Atlantic, subsequent releases fared less well. The failure to gain really big sales in the US had a far-reaching effect on the singer.

With the sales of her records dwindling during 1969 and 1970, Dusty retreated into herself, increasingly confused and questioning. She eventually decided to cut free from her flagging career, refuse any more live dates and spend her time travelling the world. At the time she described herself as tired of the constant touring of clubs and the general strain of live performance. 'I don't really want to pursue a night-club career, although it would be very easy,' she said. 'I don't think I have got the mental or physical stamina to stand it for long.'

But her anxiety was deeper-rooted and more personal than the mere exhaustion of life on the road. 'I'm not sure what I do want. I've not found it yet. I suppose it's about time I started looking for what I want rather than waiting for it to come to me, but I'm rather lazy.' She visited hypnotists and California-style personal development gurus but apparently gained little beyond help in relaxing. Ultimately she blamed 'totally inhibiting middle-class morality' for her dissatisfaction and restlessness.

The singer was not helped by the state her private life was in either, for she had no publicly known partner from whom to draw strength and support. Naturally journalists were interested in the romantic attachments of a stunning young superstar, but Dusty had always been careful to keep her private life separate from her professional persona – and totally secret. She has never married nor had any publicised affairs and has always rejected enquiries into her personal life.

Death-rattle and roll

During the seventies Dusty made various attempted come-backs. In 1972, after a two year lay-off, she took on some night-club dates, most notably at the New York Persian Room, but these were not a success. 'I floundered miserably. After several night-club dates I sensed the death-rattle of both the night-clubs and me, and I really sat sulking for a long time.' In fact, following the release of the unsuccessful *Cameo* album in 1973, she retreated for another five years, spending the time in California and, occasionally, in London.

In 1978 she made her biggest attempt at a major come-back with the album *It Begins Again,* produced by Roy Thomas Baker, the man who made his name with Queen. Baker's grandiose production techniques coupled with Dusty's perfectionism resulted in a long-drawn-out extravaganza which cost an astronomical 420,000 dollars to produce. Much of the material, by Barry Manilow, Carole Bayer Sager, Nona Hendryx and the like was somewhat middle-of-the-road in comparison with her Sixties output and the album, despite interviews and media hype, was a failure.

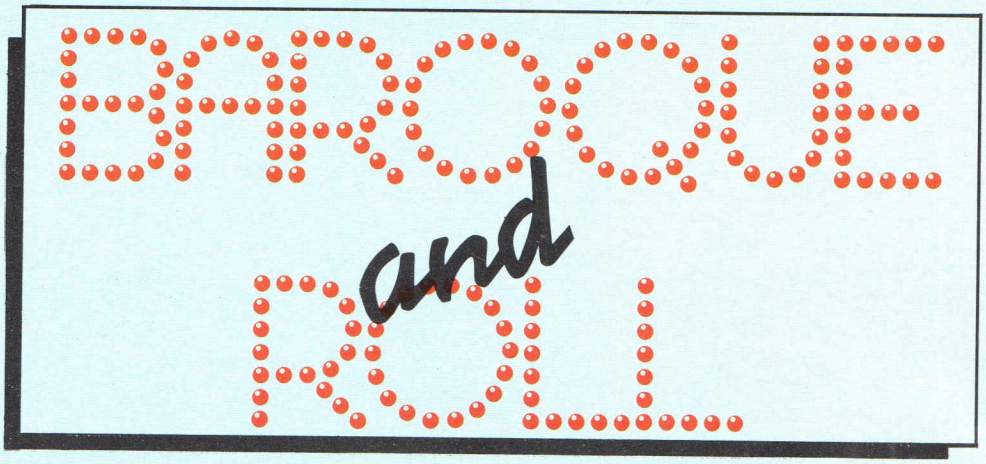
By 1982, Dusty Springfield had settled in Toronto, Canada, and although she was still making the occasional effort to record, it seemed unlikely that she would once again attain those superlative heights of power singing which had been the staple of her success in the Sixties.

CHRIS NORTH

Dusty Springfield
Recommended Listening

You Don't Have To Say You Love Me (Contour CN2016) (Includes: You Don't Have To Say You Love Me, Son Of A Preacher Man, Wishin' And Hopin', Anyone Who Had A Heart).

P.J. Proby's huge talent and outrageous gimmicks



IN A BANQUETING ROOM of the Clarendon Hotel in Hammersmith, London, during a Buddy Holly Week exhibition in 1980, stood a man in a stetson and sunglasses. His beard was greying, his trousers flared to a degree that had long passed from fashion. He was otherwise unremarkable, and yet Buddy Holly Memorial Society members clutching autograph albums quickly crowded around him. 'Be happy. Have a ball!' he scrawled on each proffered page, 'All the best – P. J. Proby.'

The extraordinary attention of a crowd composed of young and old – who had, after all, come to pay homage to Holly – was made more incredible by the realisation that the name of Proby had not appeared on a hit (or anything like it) for 13 years.

Beat and breeches

P. J. Proby was born James Marcus Smith in Houston, Texas, on 6 November 1938 and was educated at military school. After graduation, he moved to Hollywood in 1957 and changed his name to Jett Powers. He took acting and singing lessons, appeared on TV and in several B-movies. He and Ray Gilbert wrote 'Go Girl Go' which Powers recorded for Design. Another rocker, 'Loud Perfume', followed on Beta. In 1958 he formed his own group the Moondogs with Larry Taylor (of Canned Heat fame), Elliott Ingber (who became a Mother of Invention) and Marshall Leib (one of the Teddy Bears). After a couple of records they broke up.

In 1959 Powers was signed to Liberty as a songwriter and his compositions were recorded by such artists as the Dalton Brothers (later known as the Walker Brothers) and Johnny Burnette. Two years later Powers changed his name to P. J. Proby – the name belonged to a friend of Sharon Sheeley – and recorded his first singles for Liberty. After several flops he penned the soul rocker 'Wicked Woman' and recorded it under the name Orville Woods. In 1963 Jackie DeShannon introduced Proby – who was still under contract to Liberty – to Jack Good, creator of the British television '6.5 Special' and 'Oh Boy!' rock'n'roll shows.

When Good was commissioned by Brian Epstein to make a television special starring the Beatles, he brought Proby to the UK to take part in it. Good, who had earlier been inspired by Shakespearean costume to dress Gene Vincent in black leather, put Proby in knee breeches and a loose burlap smock, with a pony tail to complete the image of eighteenth century dandy.

During the period of rehearsals that preceded the making of 'Around The Beatles', Good persuaded Proby to cut a record. At that time, 1964, the British charts were dominated by home-grown beat groups and the song Good wanted him to record, 'Hold Me', had been written more than 30 years before. It was with some reluctance that Proby agreed to cut the song, and he even bet Good £25 that the record would flop. He was to lose the wager.

Good sold his independent production of 'Hold Me' to Decca; by June 1964 it was in the UK Top Twenty, where it rose to Number 3. 'Hold Me' was a somewhat unusual-sounding record. The opening bars were deceptively sedate, Proby's voice a nasal warble, but the track then erupted with the arrival – like gatecrashers – of piano, harmonica, guitar, and a brash and raucous beat. Multitracked, but with little apparent attempt at vocal unison, the singer belted out the lyric to riveting effect.

Proby's performance on the follow-up, 'Together', was even more extravagant. The backing was every bit as chaotic – its highlight a manic, distorted guitar solo from session man Jimmy Page – but the singing was its match, soaring and swooping with inimitable athleticism.

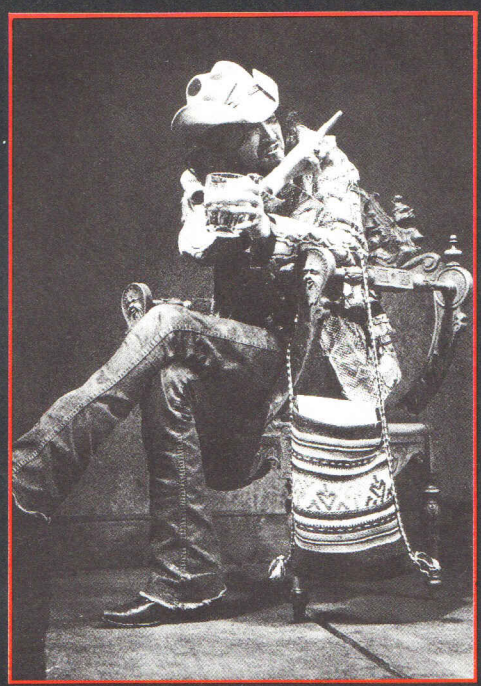
Although 'Together' repeated the Top

Ten success of its predecessor, reaching Number 8 in October, changes were in the air; before the end of the year, Proby had switched his producer and – most dramatically – his singing style. He also had to change his record company. Liberty, to whom he was still under contract, won a court action against Decca and fresh singles henceforth appeared on Liberty, including 'Somewhere', the Leonard Bernstein-Stephen Sondheim song from *West Side Story*.

Unlike his previous revivals, Proby's version was not remotely raucous. The backing was respectful of the original, while the singer's falsetto and other effects were absent. Instead his voice was deep, rich, and swollen with cloying emotion. He crooned, the girls swooned – and put the record into the Top Ten.

To promote his new-found success, Proby embarked on a series of live appearances in January 1965 – appearances that were to make him a household name, though for all the wrong reasons. Proby's stage performance was energetic in the extreme. He exuded an earthy sexuality as he leapt and swivelled across the stage, bending double to squeeze out the high notes and thrusting his pelvis with abandon.

But on 29 January, at Castle Hall, Croydon, the provocative nature of his act went too far; his velvet pantaloons split on stage and the popular press accused the singer of obscenity. Proby protested that it had been an accident, but when his trouser seams gave way again two days later the benefit of the doubt was suspended; he was banned from the major theatre chains and barred from BBC-TV.



P. J. Proby, attired in his infamous knee breeches, lets rip (left); when he crooned, his fans swooned (below). In the Seventies he attempted a comeback on the club circuit (above) and in the musical Catch My Soul *(right).*

In the middle of February, Proby's fourth single, 'I Apologise', was released and although this had been recorded before the trouser-splitting incidents, the record was promoted as P. J.'s apology for his behaviour. It reached Number 11 and reinstated Proby in many hearts.

Eccentric ways

The singer's off-stage behaviour, however, was becoming increasingly eccentric, and in June 1965 he told the *Sunday Times*: 'I'm hoping to star in a movie, *The Greatest Story Never Told*, about a pop star who goes off his head and believes he's Jesus Christ.' Largely due to such bizarre statements, and the reluctance of television and concert halls to use Proby's talents, his popularity began to wane towards the end of the year. The follow-up to 'I Apologise', 'Let The Water Run Down', barely scraped into the Top Twenty in July. Although 'Maria', another song from *West Side Story*, made Number 8 at the end of the year, it was to be Proby's last Top Thirty appearance.

For all the teasing and posturing, Proby was as much a lovable ham as a ladykiller, but he was ahead of his time. His bumps and grinds were aped by others, most notably Tom Jones, who successfully put the provocative act onto the stages from which Proby had been exiled. Had his trousers been less tightly tailored, P. J. Proby might have lasted longer, but his audience would have tired sooner or later of his vocal bravura. Had his lifestyle been as tightly tailored, he would not have found himself facing a bankruptcy charge of £60,000 in 1968.

He was still not entirely finished as a performer, however. In 1971 he played Iago in the London stage production of Jack Good's *Catch My Soul*, a rock musical interpretation of Shakespeare's *Othello*. In 1974 (and other years) he played the P. J. Proby of old for cabaret patrons, and in 1978 Good provided him with another chance when he was chosen to play the latter-day Presley in the stage musical *Elvis*. His performance in *Elvis* garnered favourable reviews but, as the show progressed, Proby began to lose his grip on the role, ad-libbing lyrics to Presley classics in an increasingly slurred voice. Eventually he was sacked. By 1982, as brashly confident as ever and a Texan to the T, he was claiming involvement in a handful of recording projects, intent on stamping those two indelible initials back on the world's pop consciousness.

ED SPARROW

P. J. Proby
Recommended Listening
P. J.'s Hits (Liberty LEP2251) (Hold Me, Maria, Together, That Means A Lot).

MR BEEFCAKE

Tom Jones: sex symbol or rock'n'roll singer?

WITH HIS BEEFCAKE IMAGE, histrionic performances and wide appeal to an older generation of pop consumers, Tom Jones was an artist in direct contrast to the early Sixties pop mainstream. The earthy sexuality of early rock'n'rollers such as Elvis Presley had been all but stamped out by the Beatles and group fever by the time Jones appeared on the scene in 1965 and re-introduced machismo and masculinity to the scene. Not only was he a solo star in the era of groups, but later in the Sixties when others bared their bodies at Woodstock, Tom Jones bared his chest in the far more salubrious surroundings of Las Vegas. Indeed, only in voyaging to the United States – where he, like countless numbers of British rock acts, was based from the end of the Sixties – could the Welsh singer be said to be at one with the times.

Beer, brawls and ballads

Born Thomas J. Woodward in Treforest, Glamorgan, on 7 June 1940, Tom Jones first surfaced as a rock'n'roller in the mid Fifties when, under-age and under the name of Tommy Scott, he sang in the bars and backrooms of South Wales for beer money. A labourer by day, Jones sang both for pleasure and for the little extra income it provided to support the wife and child he acquired in 1956. He seemed to be the mythical brawling Welshman down from the valleys spending his youth in a hurry, getting his nose broken (which he later had straightened at much expense) for the price of a pint before settling down to cosy domesticity and the occasional singsong.

When rock'n'roll died, Jones remained, singing through the musical changes of half a decade. He still kept his day-job as a casual builder's labourer, but this was becoming a chore. Now a regular on the Welsh working man's club circuit, he boasted a wide repertoire that mixed the rock'n'roll of his idol, Jerry Lee Lewis, with standards and ballads.

Tom Jones' image changed from the casual look of his early band the Playboys (bottom) to that of a flashy entertainment celebrity (inset left). On the cabaret circuit his dress shirt became a personal trademark (below).

In 1963 the singer teamed up with backing group the Senators – it was, after all the year of the group, in which even the established Adam Faith felt sufficiently threatened to annex the Roulettes. After unsuccessfully auditioning for independent producer Joe Meek, Tommy Scott and the Senators parted company; but the would-be pop star refused to quit. His perseverance was finally rewarded when, at Pontypridd in 1963, he played support to Mandy Rice Davies, who had become an overnight sensation following the revelations of her role in the Profumo affair and was determined to capitalise upon her new-found celebrity status. In the audience that night was one Gordon Mills.

As an ex-member of both the Morton Frazer Harmonica Gang and the Viscounts – who dented the Top Twenty briefly with the skiffle-inflected 'Shortnin' Bread' (1960) and a silly cover of Barry Mann's 'Who Put The Bomp'(1961) – Mills bridged the gap between the last days of the music hall and rock'n'roll. He quit the Viscounts after their short-lived success and turned to songwriting and publishing, in which guise he made the trek to Pontypridd to view Mandy Rice Davies. But it was the young supporting singer who caught Mills' eye.

Business unusual

To the Welshman, Mills must have epitomised success. He had just taken up songwriting and already had a couple of substantial hits to his credit in 'I'll Never Get Over You' and 'Hungry For Love', both Top Twenty hits for Johnny Kidd and the Pirates in 1963. He offered hit material allied to management expertise, and the singer jumped at the opportunity. He left his latest backing group, the Squires, and headed for London and another period of waiting until Mills could convince a record company that a 'male Shirley Bassey' was a good idea. But when he did so and secured his protégé a record release with 'Chills And Fever' on the Decca label, the result was disappointment for the singer. Despite his adoption of the name Tom Jones in the hope of cashing in on Tony Richardson's enormously successful film of the same name, the record flopped.

Then, in 1965, Tom recorded one of Mills' own songs, 'It's Not Unusual'. For the first time the Welshman tackled quality material and, with a superb driving arrangement to showcase it, Jones' strong, confident baritone was irresistible. The record rocketed to the top and went on to sell more than a million copies around the world.

Jones was suddenly hot property and he exploited television to the full. His awkward mannerisms, early magnified by the slickness of 'Ready, Steady, Go!', were quickly refined into a display of sexuality that was as melodramatic as his songs. (And Jones' success was to spearhead a return to favour of solo singers such as Presley, Sandie Shaw, Jackie Trent and Ken Dodd, all of whom wrenched the Number 1 position from the groups during 1965.)

Jones' follow-up, 'Once Upon A Time', failed; but later in 1965 he had a UK Top Twenty success with a revival of the old Billy Eckstine hit, 'With These Hands', and a worldwide smash with the title-song to the film *What's New Pussycat?*, which gave him his biggest US success.

Jones entered 1966 secure in his star status. Doubts still remained, however, as to where his audience lay. His first Top Thirty hit of the new year, 'Not Responsible' (written by Mills), was clearly aimed at the kids, but his chart-topping version of 'Green, Green Grass Of Home' – a country hit for Porter Wagoner the previous year – saw him leaning towards cabaret. The record entered the UK charts in November 1966 and remained there for 22 weeks. While those around him were turning to kaftans, shoulder-length hair and introspection, Tom Jones wore flashy suits, smoked businessmen's cigars and projected the image of an entertainment celebrity.

Sweat in Vegas

Jones' macho posturing and his flirtation with country music proved popular in the United States, especially after his British-made TV series was screened there. On disc, however, he came up only occasionally with a song suited to his bellowing style. One such was 'Delilah', a 1968 million-seller which, with 'It's Not Unusual' and 'Green, Green Grass', constituted his best work.

But on stage it was different: sweat pouring from a shirt torn to the waist from the efforts of his sexual gyrations and with the world of soul and country music to plunder, he could produce his histrionics every time. He was a natural for Las Vegas, a substitute Presley, deferential to authority and able to control his 'animal instincts' down to the last degree. And once Jones got to Vegas he never really came back; instead he was content to churn out a series of live records like *Live At Las Vegas* (1969) and *Live At Caesar's Palace* (1972). In a 1970 *Playboy* poll he was voted Entertainer of the Year and Top Male Singer. He had his last British (and American) hit in 1977 with the Mills-produced 'Say You'll Stay Until Tomorrow', which just made the Top Forty in the UK and made Number 15 in the US. By this time, however, records had become almost incidental to him. On 'Top Of The Pops' his name meant the past – but in the unreal surroundings of Las Vegas he was nothing less than a king.

PHIL HARDY

Help yourself! Tom Jones inspires an enthusiastic response from a member of the audience in Paris in the Seventies. Such a reaction was not unusual.

Tom Jones
Recommended Listening

Tom Jones Profile (Decca 6.24021 AL) (It's Not Unusual, I'll Never Fall In Love Again, What's New Pussycat, Delilah, Green, Green Grass Of Home, Love Me Tonight, Detroit City, Funny Familiar Forgotten Feelings, I Can't Stop Loving You, I'm Coming Home, Help Yourself, Keep On Running).

CLUBS & CABARET

The lush pastures of the night-club circuit

DURING THE HEYDAY of rock'n'roll, the very idea that such music could offer a singer a *career* seemed absurd. Rock was an excellent launching pad for a young performer, a good means of getting oneself noticed and a useful show-business apprenticeship, buts its ephemeral nature and the fickleness of its audience meant that an artist had to adapt quickly in order to keep ahead.

In most cases, the answer was to cultivate the older album-buying market with music of a more traditional, middle-of-the-road kind, and to build a career as an all-round entertainer on cabaret and night-club appearances. For the lucky ones, such a career might also take in television series, movie roles and bill-topping stints at the world's great entertainment night-spots – Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, the Talk of the Town in London, the Folies Bergère in Paris.

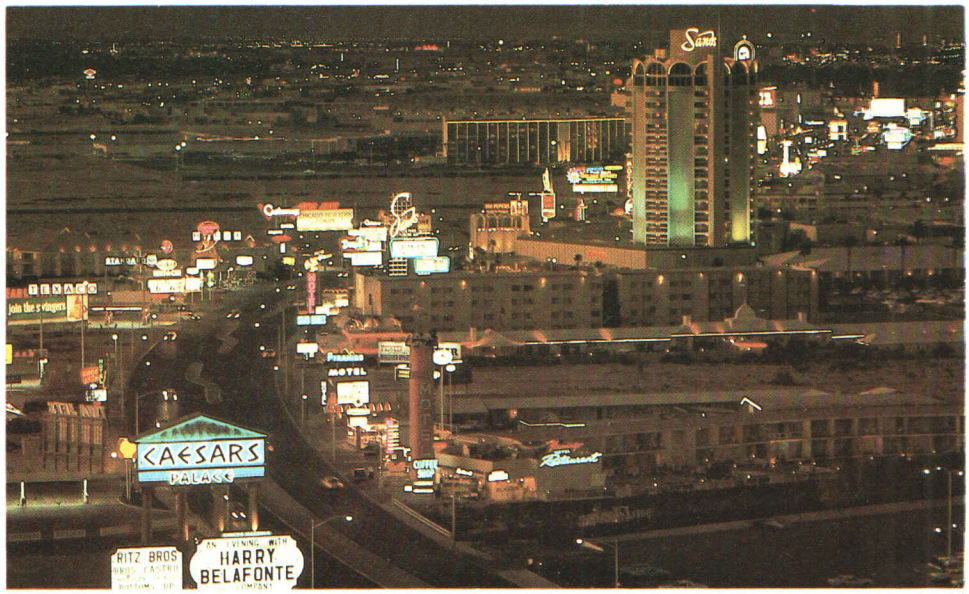
This showbiz route was well-trodden by many former teen stars during the Sixties. Many of the true pioneers of rock 'n'roll – Jerry Lee Lewis, Chuck Berry, Carl Perkins and others – hit hard times in the early years of the decade because of their failure to broaden their base beyond rock, while lesser talents stayed in the limelight by adapting readily to time-honoured show-business conventions.

Putting together a cabaret act meant learning the intricacies of stage decorum and a repertoire of standards, but above all it required putting professionalism before any notion of creativity. Survival depended not on originality of presentation but on emulating Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Perry Como or Tony Bennett, major show-business personalities from well before the rock'n'roll days.

Elvis Presley, too, seemed to chart the way ahead by apparently forsaking the world of rock around 1959 for a conventional career of lightweight albums (few containing any rock material), mediocre movies and the occasional television special. He had no need to perform 'live' and, for many years, chose not to; when he did finally return to performing in 1969, it was significant that the most prestigious night-club in Las Vegas provided the setting. Then – as now – heading a sell-out series of shows in Las Vegas represented the very peak in showbiz achievement.

Two polished superstars

From the late Fifties onwards, literally dozens of minor stars who had come to fame via the pop market tried to re-launch their careers in cabaret, film or television. Some found the transition easy. Paul Anka – an international star at 16 with 'Diana' – spread his talents wide as his hits declined, writing songs for other artists and taking roles in films like *The Longest Day*. In the Sixties he devoted most of his energies to building his business empire and devising his own highly-polished stage act, but he enjoyed renewed public prominence in the aftermath of Frank Sinatra's hit recording of his song, 'My Way'. A consummate professional since his teens, he slipped into the cabaret field more ably than any of his contemporaries, most of whom, like Frankie Avalon and Fabian Forte, had neither Anka's personality nor his astute sense of showmanship.



Las Vegas (above) was the spiritual home for those pop singers who turned to the cabaret circuit and became all round entertainers, such as Frank Sinatra (inset top, opposite). Two other famous names who went the Vegas way were Diana Ross (opposite) and Bobby Darin (inset below).

Andy Williams fared even better, thanks perhaps to his background in show-business. A one-time member of one of America's top night-club acts, the Williams Brothers, and a regular guest on Steve Allen's nationally-networked 'Tonight' show between 1954 and 1956, he was signed by Archie Bleyer to the New York-based Cadence label and had a run of massive hits with light, easy-paced ballads like 'Butterfly', 'Canadian Sunset' and 'The Hawaiian Wedding Song'. He occasionally covered rock'n'roll hits and happily played the role of a teen idol for a while, before joining Columbia (CBS) in a big-money deal in 1962.

His new record company changed the nature of his repertoire almost immediately, grooming Williams as a suave crooner in the Johnny Mathis mould with sophisticated, lushly arranged material like 'Can't Get Used To Losing You', 'Almost There' (from the film *I'd Rather Be Rich*, in which the singer appeared) and 'Can't Keep My Eyes Off You'. Always most at home on television, he fronted the award-winning 'Andy Williams Show' in the mid Sixties and became one of America's most popular singing stars abroad.

Dream Lover Darin

Bobby Darin's career followed a more erratic pattern but proved once again how – given talent, drive and the right backing – a pop artist could win the respect of the show-business establishment. In 1959, when 'Dream Lover' gave Darin his third American Top Ten hit, he seemed to be just another pop idol in the classic Avalon/Rydell mould, albeit with clear songwriting ability. Almost overnight, however, he effected a complete change in image and style by recording – and taking to Number 1 – a finger-snapping, Sinatra-like swing version of 'Mack The Knife', a classic Thirties song previously most associated with jazzman Louis Armstrong. That record set the stage for more snazzy, jazz-inflected revivals of decades-old songs like 'Won't You Come Home, Bill Bailey' and 'Lazy River', and Darin soon switched from pop one-nighters to seasons of night-club dates.

Soon after, he left Atlantic to join Capitol, who had failed in their efforts to re-sign Frank Sinatra to a new contract and saw Darin as a potential replacement. His albums for his new label included one recorded with Johnny Mercer, one of the grand old men of Tin Pan Alley songwriting and co-founder of Capitol in the mid Forties, that fully confirmed Darin's conversion to the middle-of-the-road cause. Yet, for reasons best known to himself, Darin quickly grew tired of his new persona and made another sudden decision, in 1965, to rejoin Atlantic and re-launch himself as an interpreter of folk songs.

Darin's problem was that he never quite knew exactly who he wanted to be – he variously played at being Elvis Presley, Paul Anka, Frank Sinatra, Bob Dylan and even (during a short flirtation with country music in 1962) Don Gibson – or the kind of audience he wanted to please. British pop contemporaries like Tommy Steele and Anthony Newley had no such problems, settling early on for the life of an 'all-round entertainer'.

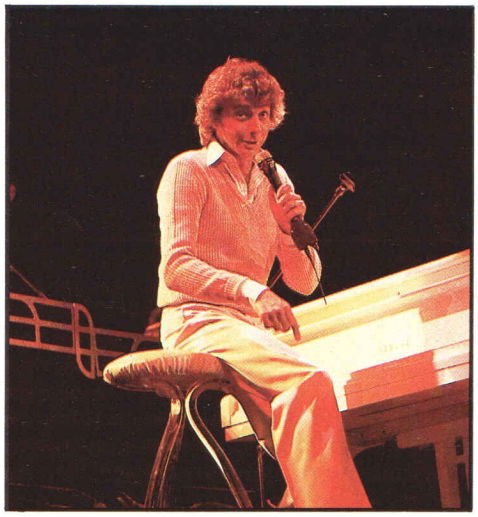
Steele took the traditional British variety route, leaving rock'n'roll for pantomime, summer seasons and (eventually) musical comedy and straight drama, while Newley stunned West End patrons by moving directly from the record charts to producing, directing, writing and starring in his own stage musical, the influential *Stop The World, I Want To Get Off*, which successfully transferred to Broadway. After enormous critical acclaim (especially in the States for this show and its sequel, *The Roar Of The Greasepaint, The Smell Of The Crowd*) Newley channelled most of his creative energies into film work and emulated his idol Noel Coward by becoming the darling of the American night-club crowd with an act that played up the eccentricities of his voice and the melodramatic qualities of his songs.

Vegas stardom

Even for those former pop stars who didn't quite make it into the Andy Williams or Tony Newley league, cabaret offered greater job security and more tangible financial rewards than the pop world would normally provide. Cabaret might mean relative obscurity, but such work could at least keep body and soul together. During the Sixties, however, the cabaret field began to assume a new importance in line with the growth in what was loosely described as 'easy listening' music: a catch-all term applied to any artists or records with adult appeal, encompassing everything from the Tijuana sound of trumpeter Herb Alpert to the country songs of Glen Campbell. Its rise stemmed from the music industry's growing realisation of the potential profitability of the 'over-25' market, which the massive sales of discs like Campbell's 'By The Time I Get To Phoenix', Tom Jones' 'Green, Green Grass Of Home', Engelbert Humperdinck's 'Release Me' and Frank and Nancy Sinatra's 'Somethin' Stupid' helped to underline in 1967.

For artists such as these – many of whom had pop beginnings – a venue like Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas offered the ideal performing environment. The night-clubs themselves changed their musical policy slightly in the wake of the easy listening boom, appreciating that late-Sixties cabaret clientele were more amenable to rock, pop and country than Fifties audiences had been, largely because of a younger age profile.

Presley's reappearance in Vegas in 1969 confirmed this, as did Tom Jones' record-breaking run there in the same year: even the most sophisticated and lush of musical arrangements could not disguise the fact that both were rock'n'rollers at heart, two of the most dynamic 'live' performers to emerge out of the rock scene. Instead of re-defining their image and style in accepted show-business terms – as Williams, Anka, Darin and Newley had all done before them, taking their cue from Sinatra and friends – Presley and



Classic exponents of Seventies easy listening included Barry Manilow (above) and the super-smooth vocal quartet Manhattan Transfer (below).

Jones were largely responsible for re-defining the nature of the cabaret singer and led the way for dozens of other rock-based acts to enter this lucrative field without necessarily making the customary compromises.

Engelbert Humperdinck, from the same management stable as Tom Jones, followed his rival to Vegas and also presented his own television series for a while, recorded (as Jones' series was) by ITV in the UK for American distribution. He had a more traditional appeal, having spent years as a minor dance-band and BBC vocalist in his previous guise as Gerry Dorsey, but the jokey sexuality of his stage act and his extensive use of country and western material owed much to the example of Tom Jones.

Even more spectacular was the success of Diana Ross, groomed by Berry Gordy as the jewel of his Motown label and launched as a superstar of the entertainment world via films (*Lady Sings The Blues, Mahogany*) and seasons in the world's cabaret capitals. Martha Reeves, Gladys Knight and the Fifth Dimension were stars of the pop/soul field who made a similar, if less lauded, breakthrough into more profitable pastures. Not every pop star's attempt to woo the diners and gamblers of Las Vegas was successful, however: Cass Elliot of the Mamas and Papas was just one artist whose Vegas debut (in 1968) ended in disaster.

Since the early Seventies, the world of 'easy listening' has tended to create its own superstars, relying no longer on artists whose public exposure came via the singles chart. Singles success may follow a sell-out tour or a big hit album – as happened to Manhattan Transfer and Barry Manilow in 1977 – but such success is merely icing on the cake, welcome but ultimately insignificant. Both Manhattan Transfer and Manilow, in fact, are classic examples of a new wave of middle-of-the-road stars – supremely professional acts who built up a following solely through night-club appearances and albums while remaining largely unknown in the teenage singles-market. Musically, both acts present a skilful mixture of middle-of-the-road styles in the context of a brash, comic and occasionally self-deprecating stage act. At the heart of their appeal is perfect showmanship and an understanding of the limits of their audience's taste.

STEPHEN BARNARD

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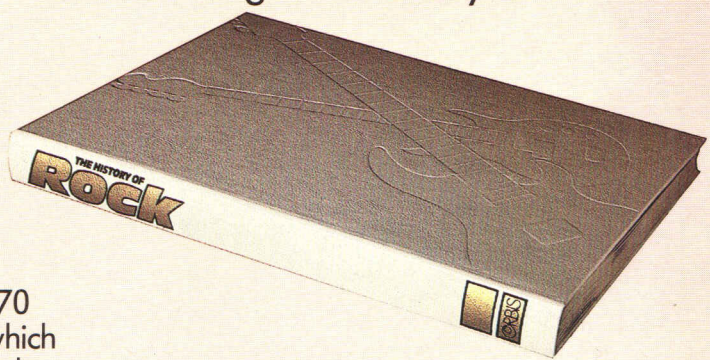

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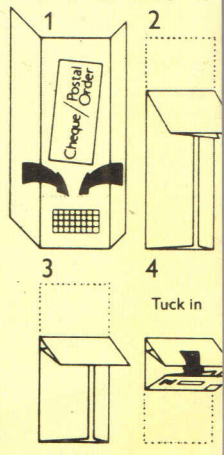

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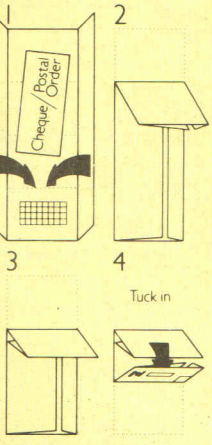

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